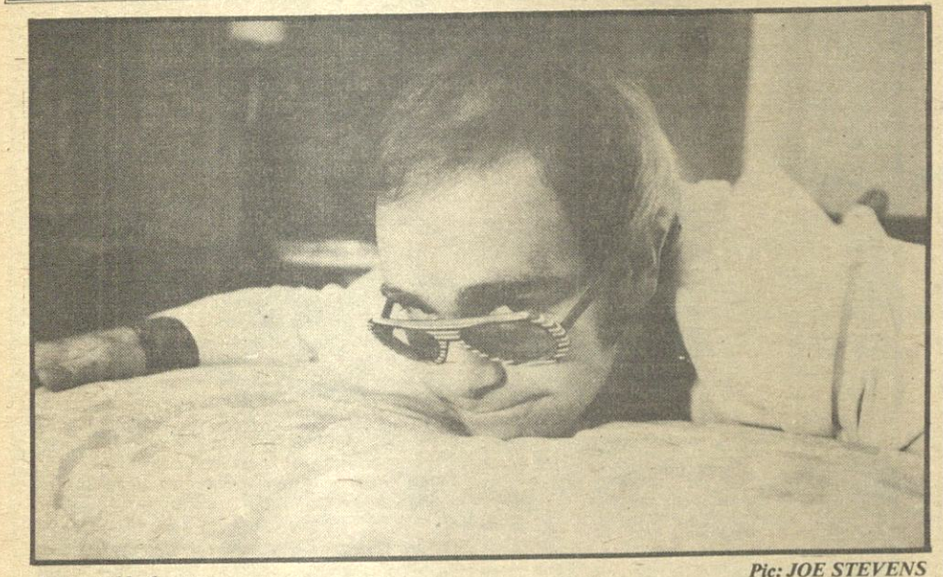
Thrills



I expected bad reviews. *Pic: JOE STEVENS*

EVEN IF I FART IT MAKES NEWS

AMSTERDAM — NINE DAYS before the Wembley Stadium gig and Elton John is scared. He's so het up about it that he's come out in a nervous rash, and as the man says "I've never had a nervous rash in my life, I came out in blotches all over the place."

Even so he looks quite healthy despite the humidity and having rehearsed steadily for several hours. Several hours for several weeks that is. New bands take some breaking in, but EJ seems to have everything happening really well with the new line up. Roger Pope replaces Nigel Olsson on drums, Kenny Passarelli (ex Joe Walsh) is on bass, Caleb Quaye joins Davey Johnstone on guitar; a new keyboard player name of James Newton Howard (an ex session man from America) plus Skunk Baxter on guitar (temporary member) and three temp back-up vocalists Donny Gerrard, Brian and Brenda Russell and one mustn't forget the percussion man Ray Cooper who plays everything from an enormous gong to some tubular bells.

Looking around the now 11 piece outfit it seems a far cry from the days when it was just Nigel, Dee, Davey and EJ.

But then Nigel and Dee quit, didn't they. Or did they? That's what we were always led to believe.

"They didn't really quit," says EJ. "It was more more phoning them up and saying that's the end of the road."

So did he then in effect sack them?

"Yes."

So why the press stories saying they had quit?

EJ looking perplexed: "I always thought everyone knew about it. I sat for two months wanting a change and the people I wanted to change were Nigel and Dee — it was a really hard decision because they were the original members so I sat for two months thinking I was going through a silly passing phase, being stupid and on a come down after touring and playing Hammersmith. Then I realised that I wasn't and that I really did want to change the band and work with some other people, so I had to actually make the phone call which wasn't very pleasant."

Did he at this stage have other musicians in mind?

"The only person I knew I wanted was Roger Pope because Kiki's band was breaking up too. Her band and mine fell apart at the same time so it was lucky in a way but if her band had still been going I would have poached Roger."

And how did the deposed members take their respective phone calls?

"Nigel was deeply hurt. But I've seen him since, had dinner with him and written a song for him so it's all right. Dee is not so happy, I haven't had a chance to see him so I think he feels currently very bitter about the whole situation. I feel closer to Nigel now cause I think he's got a solo career ahead of his own.

"I found James Newton Howard about three minutes before I got on the plane to come over here so he was just a complete out-of-the-blue shot. My agent found him in America, he plays on lots of LA sessions and played on the Ringo album.

"I rang Skunk Baxter. As a guitarist I'd met him with the Doobie Brothers but he's not a permanent one."

Out of the whole new band he seems the odd one out. He still wears his Doobie Brothers T shirt just to press the point. Doesn't that piss EJ off?

"Doobie Brothers T shirt? I think it's the only thing he's got to wear. Skunk has just come off a 40 city tour date and got on a plane to do the gig for fun. He's going back to the Doobies. The idea of the new band is to get a permanent structural thing within the band so people like Skunk can drift in and out for gigs. Caleb and Davey are the definites and James is definite and so is Kenny. Kenny I found from Joe Walsh. The back up vocalists are doing the gig for fun.

"I feel we're a better rock and roll band than we used to be. We always used to be a bit frantic. This is more funky rock and roll than a raucous rock n roll."

Elton was solely responsible for picking the Wembley bill. "The only act we couldn't get was Stevie Wonder, it was originally going to be Stevie Wonder and not the Beach Boys. Stackridge? Well that's favouritism as it says in the programme. By the time it gets to us on the bill everyone will have numb arses."

Change of subject completely. I had been somewhat aware all day of the reaction of those surrounding EJ to the Captain Fantastic review in NME. Elton in fact seemed the only one who didn't wish to chop my head off because Bob Edmands gave him a less than enthusiastic review. So does he ever get hurt by reviews?

"The first thing I do every week is go out and buy the trade papers. I sort of half expected some bad reviews. After a day it doesn't really mean anything. You sort of like to meet the reviewer and have a go at them and talk it out, but that feeling quickly disappears. I'm not that enraged by reviews any more. It's like Caroline (Rocket press officer) thought I was going to seize on you and say 'what about this Bob Edmands feller'. I don't mind a bad review, but Bob Edmands' was just pure hatred. I do pay attention to reviews, there are some sensible journalists. Christ, I've got quite a good relationship with the press."

Another change of subject — this time to the much publicised mansion which EJ was reported paying a fortune for. It is not to be, the man is not buying the much photographed house. After all the fuss in the press too.

"I've only got to fart and it's big news. I was interested in it but it was uneconomical. It was a lot of money and it would take about 25 people to run it because it had a farm attached to it."

The money however does, according to Elton "keep on rolling in. I've no idea how much. All I know is my accountants say 'you cannot buy this, you cannot buy that'."

JULIE WEBB

ON THE TOWN

KILLER GIG of the week undoubtedly goes to the Elton John Extravaganza at Wembley Stadium on Saturday with the Beach Boys, Eagles, Joe Walsh, Rufus and Stackridge making up the bill.

Elt has been rehearsing for the past three weeks in Amsterdam with his new band, and will be featuring material from his "Captain Fantastic" album.

Useless information dept: the stage is 150 ft. wide and 70 ft. deep — to hold 32 amp stacks each side of the stage. Among the crowd (the place can hold 72,000 and will because it is sold out) will be some 1,000 bods from Paris who are flying in especially; also 1,000 from Brussels. 100 from Washington and 250 from Iceland.

Doors open 10.30 am. Gig starts 11.30. Finishes 10 pm.

NATIONWIDE GIG GUIDE

THURSDAY

BIRMINGHAM Digbeth Hall: **ALAN HULL**
BRIGHTON Dome: **DONOVAN**
CHEADLE The Highwayman: **SASSAFRAS**
COVENTRY Walsgrave Hotel: **SHAKIN' STEVENS AND THE SUNSETS**
HARTLEPOOL Club Gemini: **MAJOR LANCE**
HIGH WYCOMBE Nags Head: **KURSAAL FLYERS**
LEEDS University: **GAS WORKS**
LIVERPOOL University: **WISPER**
LONDON CAMDEN Dingwalls: **PACIFIC EARDRUM** with **BIG JIM SULLIVAN**
LONDON Speakeasy: **F.B.I.**
LONDON STRAND Lyceum: **DR. FEELGOOD**
LONDON W.1. Valbonne: **BROOK BENTON**
LONDON WEST KENSINGTON The Nashville: **GENO WASHINGTON BAND**
MARGATE Atlantis & **LONDON** Gullivers Club: **LIMMIE & THE FAMILY COOKIN'**
NORWICH East Anglia University: **BILLY COBHAM**
PENZANCE Winter Gardens: **FUMBLE**
PORTSMOUTH Locarno: **CURVED AIR**
POULTON LE FYLDE College of Education: **MIKE ABSALOM**
READING Target Club: **KRAKATOA**

FRIDAY

BASILDON Arts Centre: **BURGLAR BILL**
BIRMINGHAM Barbarella's: **LIMMIE & THE FAMILY COOKIN'**
BIRMINGHAM University: **KURSAAL FLYERS/JESS RODEN BAND/UPP**
BIRMINGHAM West Hill College: **WISPER**
CHELTENHAM Town Hall: **FUMBLE**
CHICHESTER Bishop Otter College: **UPP**
CIRENCESTER Crown Inn: **KRAZY KAT**
CLACTON St. Osyth College: **HUSTLER**
HARTLEPOOL Staincliffe Hotel: **BILL BARCLAY**
HEREFORD Flamingo: **DESMOND DEKKER & THE ACES**
LANCASTER University: **YAKETY YAK**
LEEDS University: **SASSAFRAS**
LIVERPOOL St. Katherine's College: **SHAKIN' STEVENS & THE SUNSETS**
LONDON BARNET Trent Park College: **NICOL & MARSH'S EASY STREET**
LONDON CAMDEN Dingwalls: **MICHIGAN FLYERS / BUNNY**
LONDON Charing Cross Road Sundown: **LEE KOSMIN BAND**
LONDON ISLINGTON Hope & Anchor: **RED BEANS & RICE**
LONDON ISLINGTON King's Head: **CAMDEN GOODS**
LONDON LEWISHAM Odeon: **LITTLE RICHARD**
LONDON Royal Holloway College: **CURVED AIR**
LONDON Speakeasy: **JIMMIE THOMAS**
MAIDSTONE Technical College: **THIN LIZZY**
MARGATE Dreamland: **SWEET SENSATION**
MILTON KEYNES Open University: **GLOBAL VILLAGE TRUCKING COMPANY**
NEWPORT SALOP The Village: **DUANE EDDY**
NOTTINGHAM Playhouse: **JOHN MARTYN**
READING University: **STACKRIDGE /MOON / PARADISE**
SCARBOROUGH Penthouse: **BAND CALLED 'O'**
SOUTHPORT Grand Theatre: **BROOK BENTON**
STAFFORD North Staffs. Polytechnic: **WHEELS**
SUNDERLAND Annabel's: **MAJOR LANCE**
TORQUAY Princess Theatre: **VAL DOONICAN**
UXBRIDGE Brunel University: **NEUTRONS**
WAKEFIELD West Bretton College: **GOOD HABIT**
WOLVERHAMPTON Lafayette: **RUFAS THOMAS**
WOLVERHAMPTON Polytechnic: **HUMSTRUM LILT'**

SATURDAY

BARROW Maxim's: **LIMMIE AND THE FAMILY COOKIN'**
BEDFORD College of Education: **SASSAFRAS**
BIRMINGHAM Incognito's: **STEVE GIBBONS BAND**
BIRMINGHAM University & **DUDLEY** College of Education: **MIKE ABSALOM**
BURTON 76 Club: **NEUTRONS**
CANTERBURY Bridge Country Club: **SPARROW**
CARDIFF Cyncoed College: **SHAKIN' STEVENS & THE SUNSETS**
COVENTRY Theatre: **DONOVAN**
DAGENHAM Roundhouse: **BAND CALLED 'O'**
DURHAM University: **GLOBAL VILLAGE TRUCKING COMPANY**
EASTBOURNE Winter Gardens: **NEUTRONS**
GILLINGHAM Red Lion: **WISPER**
GOOLE Vikings: **DRIFTING HARMONY**
GUILDFORD Surrey University: **BILLY COBHAM**
HASTINGS Pier Pavilion: **RONNIE LANE'S SLIM CHANCE/THIN LIZZY**
HUNTINGDON B.R.J. Club: **BAND CALLED CHARLIE**
LEICESTER University: **FUMBLE**
LIVERPOOL Stadium: **JESS RODEN BAND**
LONDON CAMDEN Dingwalls: **DUCKS DELUXE**
LONDON Charing Cross Road Sundown: **GIGGLES**
LONDON ISLINGTON Hope & Anchor: **NICOL MARSH'S EASY STREET**
LONDON Speakeasy: **VIOLA WILLS**
LONDON STRATFORD Carpenters Tenants' Association: **SLIPSTREAM**
LONDON WEMBLEY Stadium: **ELTON JOHN BAND/EAGLES/JOE WALSH/RUFUS/STACKRIDGE**
LOWESTOFT South Pier Pavilion: **REAL THING**
MANCHESTER Carib Club: **FREEDOM**
MIDDLESBROUGH Town Hall: **HEDGEHOG PIE**
NEWCASTLE City Hall: **LITTLE RICHARD**
NOTTINGHAM Playhouse: **DUBLINERS**
NOTTINGHAM University: **GLIDER**
OXFORD St. Edmund's Hall: **OSIBISA**
OXFORD University: **CURVED AIR/AMAZING BLONDEL**
PAIGNTON Penelope's: **GENO WASHINGTON BAND**
PLYMOUTH Guildhall: **CARAVAN**
READING Berkshire College: **KURSAAL FLYERS**
SCUNTHORPE Priory Hotel: **HUSTLER**
SHEFFIELD University: **SUTHERLAND BROTHERS & QUIVER/PARADISE**
SOUTH SHIELDS Festival: **BILL BARCLAY**
STAFFORD North Staffs. Polytechnic: **WHEELS**
STAPLEFORD Equalize Club: **HUMSTRUM LILT**
STROUD Leisure Centre: **DECAMERON**
WALSALL College of Education: **UPP**
WINSFORD Civic Centre: **DUANE EDDY**

SUNDAY

BIRMINGHAM Albert St. The Jug: **NIMROD**
COVENTRY Mr. George's: **AMAZING BLONDEL**
CRAMLIN Viaduct Hotel: **RED BEANS & RICE**
CROYDON Fairfield Hall: **DONOVAN**
CROYDON Greyhound: **BILLY COBHAM**
DOUGLAS Isle of Man Palace Lido: **LIMMIE & THE FAMILY COOKIN'**
DURHAM Dome Festival: **GLOBAL VILLAGE TRUCKING COMPANY**
FARNBOROUGH Redgrave Theatre: **ALAN HULL**
GT. YARMOUTH Caister Holiday Camp: **PETER GORDENO**
HARROW Tithe Farm House: **KURSAAL FLYERS**
LEEDS Staging Post: **KRAZY KAT**
LEICESTER Scraptoft Valley WMC: **BAND CALLED CHARLIE**
LONDON Chalk Farm Roundhouse: **THIN LIZZY/GOOD HABIT/MOON**
LONDON CHELSEA Nose Wine Bar: **GEORGE ADAIE**
LONDON FINCHLY Torrington: **F.B.I.**
LONDON FULHAM Golden Lion: **SHAKIN' STEVENS & THE SUNSETS**
LONDON Greenwich Well Hall Open Theatre: **LONDON WAINWRIGHT**
LONDON HAMMERSMITH Palais: **LITTLE RICHARD**
LONDON New Victoria: **DUANE EDDY**
LONDON TWICKENHAM Winning Post: **SNAFU**
LONDON Well Hall Open Theatre: **LOUNDON WAINWRIGHT**
MARSDEN Inn: **BILL BARCLAY**
MEXBOROUGH Jesters & **LINCOLN** Aquarius: **MAJOR LANCE**
NORWICH Festival: **GAS WORKS**
NOTTINGHAM Imperial Hotel: **CISCO**
REDRUTH Regal: **CARAVAN**
ROMFORD Albemarle Club: **BYZANTIUM**

MONDAY

CARMARTHEN Trinity College: **SASSAFRAS / RED BEANS & RICE**
DERBY Lonsdale College: **MIKE MARAN & BRILLO**
DUNSTABLE Queensway Hall: **LITTLE RICHARD**
HANLEY Heavy Steam Machine: **SNAFU**
HONINGTON R.A.F. Suffolk Punch Club: **JIMMY POWELL AND THE DIMENSIONS**
LEIGH Garrick: **DEL SHANNON**
LONDON CAMDEN Dingwalls: **GONZALEZ**
LONDON FULHAM Golden Lion: **BACKWARD DOG**
LONDON KENSINGTON High Streeet Rainbow Rooms: **FUMBLE**
LONDON Marquee Club: **SUTHERLAND BROTHERS & QUIVER**
LONDON PECKHAM Newlands Tavern: **KURSAAL FLYERS**
LONDON Speakeasy: **WITCHES BREW**
LONDON W.14 The Kensington: **POODLES**
NOTTINGHAM Playhouse: **IMRAT KHAN**
PORTSMOUTH Mecca: **RUFUS THOMAS**
SWANSEA Brangwyn Hall: **CAMEL**

WEDNESDAY

ALNWICK College: **HEDGHOG PIE**
BIRMINGHAM Barbarella's: **DEL SHANNON**
BIRMINGHAM Bogart's: **GLIDER**
BIRMINGHAM Town Hall: **CURVED AIR**
CARDIFF College of Food & Technology: **SASSAFRAS**
CARDIFF New Moon: **RED BEANS & RICE**
CRUMLIN Viaduct Hotel: **WHEELS**
KINGS LYNN Corn Exchange: **JESS RODEN BAND**
LEICESTERSHIRE Craft Club: **HUMSTRUM LILT**
LEICESTER Rainbow & Dove: **CAPTAIN VIDEO**
LONDON CAMDEN Dingwalls: **LARRY CORYELL**
LONDON EDGWARE ROAD Crown: **PADDY GREY/GEORGE ADAIR**
LONDON Marquee: **HUSTLER**
LONDON PECKHAM Newlands Tavern: **LEE KOSMIN BAND**
LONDON Queen Elizabeth Hall: **"THE STORY OF RAGTIME"**
LONDON Speakeasy: **MOON**
LONDON STREATHAM Cat's Whiskers: **MIKE MORTON SOUND**
READING University: **DESMOND DEKKER & THE ACES**
SHREWSBURY Music Hall: **ALAN HULL**
SOUTHAMPTON Guildhall: **BILLY COBHAM**
TORQUAY Town Hall: **CAMEL**
WHITCHURCH Civic Centre: **REAL THING**

RESIDENCIES

BATLEY Variety Club: **NORMAN WISDOM**
● Week from Sunday
BIRMINGHAM La Dolce Vita: **WICKED LADY**
BLACKBURN Cavendish: **TOMMY HUNT**
● Week from Sunday
BLACKPOOL Norbeck Hotel: **ELLIE**
● Week from Sunday
CAMBERLEY Lakeside Country Club: **ROCKIN' BERRIES**
● Week from Sunday
DERBY Bailey's: **ALVIN STARDUST**
● Week from Sunday
LEICESTER Bailey's: **MAC & KATIE KISSOON**
● Week from Sunday
OLDHAM Bailey's: **BROTHERLY LOVE**
● Week from Sunday
RHYL Tito's: **TAMMY JONES**
● Week from Monday
SHEFFIELD Bailey's: **BLACK ABBOTTS**
● Week from Sunday
SHEFFIELD Fiesta: **DUBLINERS**
● Week from Sunday
SOUTHEND Talk of the South: **THREE DEGREES**
● Week from Sunday
SOUTH SHIELDS Tavern: **JUST OLIVER**
● Week from Sunday
STOCKTON Bailey's: **SWEET CHARIOT**
● Week from Sunday
STOCKTON Fiesta: **JIMMY HELMS**
● Week from Sunday
WAKEFIELD Theatre Club: **KARLINS/KENNY LYNCH**
● Week from Monday
WATFORD Bailey's: **CANDLEWICK GREEN**
● Week from Sunday

Compiled by JULIE WEBB